

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 212881

NODIS

FOR AMB. YOUNG FROM UNA

FOLLOWING REPEAT PRETORIA 4845 SENT ACTION SECSTATE 18 AUG 78

QUOTE S E C R E T PRETORIA 4845

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1, 3

TAGS: MNUC, PARM, SF

SUBJECT: PRESS LEAKS ON US-SOUTH AFRICA NUCLEAR TLAKS

REF: STATE 209827

1. APPRECIATE REFTTEL, PARTS OF WHICH I HAVE SHARED WITH FOURIE IN
CONFIDENTIAL PERSONAL NOTE ASSURING HIM THAT WALKER STORY DOES
NOT STEM FROM ANY OFFICIALLY INSPIRED LEAK FROM THE USG.

2. WALKER STORY HAS NOT RPT NOT APPEARED IN SA PRESS. WHILE I
DO NOT THINK STORY WOULD NECESSARILY AFFECT FOURIE'S ATTITUDE

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TOWARD OUR REQUEST FOR FOLLOW-UP EXCHANGE ON KALAHARI, IT COULD
HAVE ADVERSE EFFECT ON GENERAL MALAN IF HE OR OTHERS ARE
CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBILITY THAT ANY INFORMATION THEY GIVE US ON
KALAHARI SITE MIGHT EVENTUALLY BE LEAKED, WHETHER THEIR
REASON FOR FEARING LEAKS IS BASED ON TECHNICAL GROUNDS OF
SECURITY OR ON SOME BROADER POLITICAL CONCERN.

3. WITH REGARD TO LATTER POINT, I HAVE ALWAYS WONDERED HOW WE WOULD REALLY EXPECT SAG OFFICIALS TO DEAL WITH OUR PRESSUE FOR CLARIFICATION IF THERE WERE ANY POSSIBILITY THAT THE KALAHARI SITE MIGHT ORIGINALLY HAVE HAD SOME NUCLEAR PURPOSE, CONTRARY TO VORSTER'S ASSURANCE ON THIS POINT. WHAT IF BY ANY CHANCE THEY HAD BOXED THEMSELVES IN BY A FALSE ASSURANCE (POSSIBLY WITH INTENTION OF ELIMINATING SITE AND HOLDING TO ASSURANCES IN THE FUTURE), OR BY RELIANCE ON SOME CLEVER SEMANTICAL INTERPRETATION OF THEIR ASSURANCE ON THE KALAHARI? THEY MIGHT CONSIDER EITHER OF THESE POSSIBILITIES AS EVEN MORE SENSITIVE--AND SUSCEPTIBLE TO DAMAGING LEAKS--THAN CERTAIN TECHNICAL MILITARY INFORMATION I AM NOT SUGGESTING THAT I BELIEVE OR HAVE ANY REASON TO SUSPECT THIS TO BE THE CASE, BUT I CAN CERTAINLY SEE THE DIFFICULTY SUCH A SITUATION WOULD CREATE FOR THEM.

4. IN LAST CONVERSATION, BY THE WAY, FOURIE REPEATED GENERAL LEMMMER' POINT THAT KALAHARI SITE WAS LOCATED IN RELATIVELY CLOSE PROXIMITY TO SEVERAL OPERATING FARM-HOME SITES IN FARMING COMMUNITY AND THAT THIS WAS HARDLY CONSISTENT WITH THEORY OF NUCLEAR TEST SITE. I ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THIS POINT HAD BEEN MADE BUT NOTED THAT, IN THEORY AT LEAST, FARMS COULD CONTINUE TO BE OPERATED DURING CONSTRUCTION/PREPARATION PAHSE, THEN ABANDONED WHEN TESTING SITE WAS READY.

5. PROSPECTS FOR CLEARING UP THE KALAHARI MYSTERY PROBABLY
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DEPEND GREATLY ON GENERAL MALAN'S PERSONAL ATTITUDE, WHICH IS DIFFICULT TO GAUGE AT THE MOMENT, AS IT MAY WELL BE AFFECTED BY SUSPICION AND POSSIBLY CONCERN ABOUT WESTERN MOTIVES IN NAMIBIA. I BELIEVE OUR BEST BET FOR THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, IS TO LEAVE MATTERS WITH FOURIE, WHO SEEMS TO UNDERSTAND OUR POSITION QUITE WELL.
EDMONDSON

UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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